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Costa Rica Stymied in Hunt for Assassin

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SAN JOSE, Costa Rica—The assassin who killed three reporters and a guerrilla in an attempt to blow up Nicaraguan rebel leader Eden Pastora three months ago has vanished, leaving behind rage and mystery but no solid leads.

Costa Rican investigators say they have come to a dead end in their effort to establish his identity and whereabouts, and await answers from police in other countries to queries sent out about the prime suspect. But with no major government intelligence agency putting a high priority on the search, diplomatic sources acknowledge, the man who tried to kill the anti-Sandinista guerrilla leader, killing four other people and wounding two dozen in the process, is likely to remain free for other assignments in the future.

Based on interrogation of reporters present at the May 30 blast, Costa Rican investigators are convinced it was set off by a bearded man posing as a photographer and carrying a stolen Danish passport identifying him as Per Anker Hansen. The aluminum camera case he was carrying, they say, was packed with C4 plastic explosive and detonated by signals from a small radio device found later near the shack where Pastora had just begun a news conference.

The investigators know the assassin was not Hansen. The real Hansen, a Danish architect who reported his passport stolen four years ago, has never been to Central America. They also believe the killer was not a photographer. The agency he said he works for does not exist and French authorities report nobody ever heard of or saw him at the Paris address he listed on registering at the Gran Via Hotel in San Jose.

Instead, inquiries about the bomber produce a picture of a ruth-

less professional trained in living underground without leaving a trail and backed up by enough resources to carry out his mission with reliable technology and at least two sets of false documents.

Although not conclusive, sources close to the investigation say, this points to a government intelligence agency or well organized underground group as sponsor of the assassination attempt. Those following the case have speculated in all directions, usually in line with their political leanings.

Curtin Winsor, the U.S. ambassador here, has announced that Nicaragua's Sandinista government is the logical author of the crime. But some of Pastora's associates, with no more to go on than Winsor, have pointed at the CIA. Still others have suggested the bomber was working for the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, a rival anti-Sandinista group that, at CIA urging, was seeking an alliance that Pastora would not accept.

Pastora, now recovered from burns suffered in the bombing, has publicly blamed the CIA. Just as publicly, however, he has suggested it could have

been the Sandinistas, rival guerrillas or colleagues with whom he was feuding over the suggested alliance. Close associates say the flamboyant guerrilla chief has no proof for any of the speculation.

Some Costa Rican investigators have privately underlined two elements they say point suspicion at Nicaraguan intelligence. First are reports from undisclosed sources that the assassin left Costa Rica overland for Nicaragua the day after the explosion. Second, they say, the method used May 30 resembled an earlier attempt to assassinate Pastora, privately attributed by Costa Rican officials to Sandinista intelligence agents.

In that attempt, June 29, 1983, a Nicaraguan was killed and a second injured when a bomb they were carrying to a meeting here with Pastora exploded prematurely. Against this background, investigators here note that the radio device used to detonate the May 30 bomb used two frequencies, a precaution they say was designed to prevent premature explosion by stray signals from other radios such as walkie-talkies.

But unless the killer is captured and interrogated, investigators say, these leads are little more than informed speculation. Angel Edmundo Solano, Costa Rica's recently dismissed public security minister, has acknowledged that authorities here moved too slowly to detain witnesses and gather evidence in the first hours after the blast.

The man posing as Hansen had left the riverside shack, just inside the Nicaraguan border, moments before the bomb exploded at 7:20 p.m. He was among the first to climb into boats taking wounded to nearby Ciudad Quesada in Costa Rica, according to reporters on the scene, despite the fact that he was only slightly wounded.

At a hospital in Ciudad Quesada, he was treated for minor cuts, doctors recorded. It was there that photographers took the pictures that Costa Rican authorities and news agencies have distributed around the world.

During his overnight stay, he also gave an interview to Radio Cima of Ciudad Quesada, describing the bombing scene, and asked nurses whether a woman had come asking for him. The next morning he traveled by taxi to San Jose with Peter Torbiornsson, a Swedish television producer with whom he had traveled in search of Pastora in previous weeks.

The pair arrived at the Gran Via Hotel about 10:30 a.m. Torbiornsson went to a San Jose hospital for treatment of his wounds and the man calling himself Hansen paid his hotel bill and dropped out of sight.

Since then, investigators of the Costa Rican Intelligence and Security Directorate, under Solano, and the Organization for Judicial Investigations, an arm of the courts, say they have established few details about the killer.

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